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WHEELS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF VERSE

NEW YORK AGENTS:
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WHEELS : A SECOND CYCLE
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1917
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Sacheverell Sitwell

NOTE.

We are indebted to Mr. C. W. Beaumont for the design on the cover of this book.

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PREFACE.

ARMCHAIR.

(In Bad Taste, 2.)

If I were still of handsome middle-age
I should not govern yet, but still should hope
To help the prosecution of this war.
I'd talk and eat (though not eat wheaten bread),
I'd send my sons, if old enough, to France,
Or help to do my share in other ways.
All through the long spring evenings, when the sun
Pursues its primrose path towards the hills,
If fine, I'd plant potatoes on the lawn;
If wet, write anxious letters to the Press,
I'd give up wine and spirits, and with pride
Refuse to eat meat more than once a day
And seek to rob the workers of their beer.
The only way to win a hard-fought war
Is to annoy the people in small ways,
Bully or patronise them, as you will!
I'd teach poor mothers, who'd got seven sons
—All fighting men of clean and sober life—
How to look after babies and to cook;
Teach them to save their money, and invest;
Not to bring children up in luxury
—But do without a nursemaid in the house!

If I were old, or only seventy,
Then should I be a great man in his prime.
I should rule army-corps: at my command
Men would rise up, salute me, and attack
—And die.—Or I might also govern men
By making speeches with my toothless jaws,
Chattering constantly; and men should say
'One grand old man is still worth half his pay!'

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That day I 'd send my grandsons out to France
—And wish I 'd got ten other ones to send
(One cannot sacrifice too much, I 'd say !)
Then would I make a noble toothless speech,
And all the list'ning parliament would cheer.
' Gentlemen, we will never end this war
Till all the younger men with martial mien
Have entered capitals ; never make peace
Till they are cripples, on one leg, or dead ! '
Then would the Bishops all go mad with joy,
Cantuar, E bore and the other ones
Be overwhelmed with pious ecstasy
In thanking Him we 'd got a Christian—
An Englishman—still worth his salt—to talk.
In every pulpit they would preach and prance ;
And our great Church would work, as heretofore
To bring this poor old Nation to its knees.
Then we 'd forbid all Liberty and make
Free speech a relic of our impious past ;
And when this war is finished, when the world
Is torn and bleeding, cut and bruised to death,
Then I 'd pronounce my peace terms—to the poor !

But as it is, I am not ninety yet
And so must pay my reverence to these men,—
These grand old men who still can see and talk
Who sacrifice each other's sons each day.
O Lord, let me be ninety yet, I pray.
Methuselah was quite a youngster when
He died. Now, vainly weeping, we should say,
' Another great man perished in his prime ! '
O let me govern, Lord, at ninety-nine !

OSBERT SITWELL.

Line 11. *Supra*. *E bore* is a Printer's error. It should have been printed *Ebor*.

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FOUNTAINS.

('THE graven fountain-masks suffer and weep.—
Carved with a smile, the poor mouths clutch
At a half-remembered song—
Striving to forget the agony of ever laughing.'

Sacheverell Sitwell.)

SOME fountains sing of love
In full and flute-like notes that charge the night
With all the red-mouthed essence of the rose;
Then turn to voices murmuring above,
Among the trees,
Of hidden sweet delight.

Another fountain flows
With the faint music of a first spring breeze;
Each falling drop is jewelled by the moon
To some fine luminous ecstasy of light.
It sings of noon,
Of sunlit blossoms on a first spring day
And all things sweet, and pleasant to the sight.

Another fountain sings
Of the cool pleasures of those moonlit hours
When dappled sylvan things

Fountains.

Trample through thickets and through secret bowers
To prance and play,
Or, squatting round in rings,
To wreathe their horned young heads with wan sweet flowers
Till dawn comes grey and sweeps them to the wood.

Another fountain sobs
Its song of passions that have passed away.
Then with a sound like threatening rolling drums, it throbs
And bursts into a flood
Of fierce wild music: and its savage spray
Becomes the blood
Renewed, of crimes long past.

Another fountain sings its song of fear,
Of rustics flying fast
Before some foe—
A deadly unknown foe that comes so near
They feel his panting breath
And run for many a lengthy panic mile.

* * *

Those graven fountain-masks are white with woe!
Carved with a happy smile
They strive to weep . . .
—End their eternal laughing—for awhile
To lose themselves in sleep
Or in the silver peacefulness of death.

PROMENADES.

LONG promenades against the sea,
Kaleidoscopic, chattering!
Pavilions rising from the sea,
On which a fawning flattering
Hot crush of orientals move,
And sell their cheap and tawdry wares,
To other Jews, and aldermen,
And rich retired provincial mayors.
Oh! many colours in the sun;
Copper and gold predominate!
Parasols held 'gainst the sun
Throw down their shadows inchoate
On leering faces looking sly—
All shining with the heat of June.
The shifting masses move and talk
And whistle tunes all out of tune.

* * *

Long promenades against the sea,
And oranges and mandolines!
Pavilions rising from the sea
And penny-in-the-slot machines!

PROSPECT ROAD.

To Edith.

GIGANTIC houses, tattered by all time,
Raise their immense and ruined bulk and height
In one unending universal street,
Against a strange and sullen yellow sky
—Like sunset trickling through into the sea—
Down to the depths,—yellow and grey and green.
Blind windows face the interminable road:—
Innumerable those windows seem to stretch
All smeared and stained and stamped with time and blood,
—Stains that seem faces,—horrid twitching masks
Moving their lewd, derisive lips and tongues
Spitting out treacheries with vampire lips,—
Or eyes that gaze from far blank-stretching walls
—The tortured eyes of those who see their death
Approaching æon by æon along this road.

Prospect Road.

Behind the walls sound voices whispering
Of dire and hidden, carefully hidden, thoughts
Cruel, wicked and unfathomable things
That lie behind this infamy of stone.
Then clamour, shrieking voices, or a pause
That falls like lead through the suspended air ;
Broken by laughter,—rending piercing sounds
That seem to tear the fabric of our minds.

* * *

Slinking along these wicked stricken walls
I reached a shining distant point of light.—
And glory came—vast and unending light,
Rays—flashing, writhing rays of light.
And then the music sounded. Ah, that sound !

Cadences rose and fell unendingly—
Quivering shining waves of sound and sight—
Sounds of the universe—the cries of space
And planets tumbling wildly round our world
—Showing the meaning of the meaningless.
' God and Eternity '—strange flashing sounds
The whirl of Time, Melchisedec—Glory of God
And space,—the universe,—like framing words—
Gog and Magog,—infinity—The rush of waters
And the sky comes down.
Down with the splintering stars.

RAG-TIME.

THE lamps glow here and there, then echo down
The vast deserted vistas of the town :—
Each light the echo'd note of some refrain
Repeated in the city's fevered brain.
Yet all is still, save when there wanders past
—Finding the silence of the night too long—
Some tattered wretch who, from the night outcast,
Sings with an aching heart a comic song.
The vapid parrot-words flaunt through the night—
Silly and gay—yet terrible. We know
Men sang these words in many a deadly fight
And threw them—laughing—to a solemn foe :

Sang them where tattered houses stand up tall and stark
And bullets whistle through the ruined street,
And live men tread on dead men in the dark,
And skulls are sown in fields once sown with wheat.
Across the sea, where night is dark with blood
And rockets flash, and guns roar hoarse and deep,
They struggle through entanglements and mud
They suffer wounds—and die.—
But here they sleep.

From far away the outcast's vacuous song
Re-echoes like the singing of a throng ;
His dragging footfalls echo down the street,
And turn into a myriad marching feet.

THE GIPSY QUEEN.

A RAGGED Gipsy walked the road,
Her eyes blazed fierce and strong
But she gazed at me as on she strode
She fiercely gazed and long.

'Give me a penny, Sir,' she said,
'To buy me drink and buy me bread
For I've nothing had to eat or drink,
And at night I never sleep a wink.
Cold is the snow and wet the rain,
But my soul died when my love was slain!'

Fair Gipsy, in some far southern clime,
I've seen your face before
In some far other distant time,—
But whom are you weeping for?

''Twas Antony I loved,' she said,
'For him in vain I shed these tears,
But my loved Antony is dead,
Is dead these long two thousand years.
Then I was once great Egypt's pride,
And feared by friend and foe,

* * *

Yet they believe Cleopatra died
Two thousand years ago!'

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

I LAY awake in that dim room of fear
Which seemed to hold the essence of the night
Clutched in the grip of its tall sentient walls :
Dark walls and high, that stretch for ever up—
Up to the darkness, vague and menacing,
As if no light could ever penetrate
That mist of shadows, only cast a gloom
More cavernous upon the atmosphere
That seems to thicken into cloudy shapes,
Substantiate,—then disappear and die.
And all the room is full of whisperings ;
Of moving things that hope I do not heed ;
And sudden gusts of wind blow cold upon
My head, lifting the heavy mantle of the air,
Revealing for an instant some vague thought
Snatched from the haunting lumberland of dreams.
Far in the distance, from the open night,
Sounds an insistent hooting from the wood ;
The owl is calling to its kindred things.
The bat emits its sinful piercing note—
So high one cannot hear it, only feel
The rhythm beat within the shrinking ear.

The Return of the Prodigal.

A faint breeze blows in from the countryside
Rustling the curtains with the forest's breath,
Stirring the grass of many an unknown tomb
Some new,—some immemorably old,
Whose dwellers never heard an owl at night
Only the reptile sounds and beating wings
Of some forefather of that bird of night—
Some flapping scaly monster with huge wings.
Then, sudden, through the rustling of the room
Silence shrills out its startling trumpet-call
Of terror, and the house is frozen still.
Despair dropp 'd down like rain upon my heart,
Catching my breath and clutching at my throat
Fear magnified my senses and my brain
Could hear beyond the threshold of this world.
Then through the threatening silence of the house
The silent waiting for the coming play—
There came that halting well-remembered tread,
That dreadful limp, and dragging of the feet,
That cruel sin-white face looked through the door!
And in my scream—that rent the trembling air,
Reaching the woods and tainting them with death,
Filling the fountain with strange ripplings
That make the moon's reflection but a mask
Like to that face of shame—my soul passed out—
Out of my ashen lips, to find its end.

OSBERT SITWELL.

LONDON.

I LOVE the cruel contrasts of the city,—
An artist work that fools consider muddle,—
As much a muddle as a winter sky
Whose fiercely piled-up clouds of black and grey
Are shot with fitful gleams of golden light ;
As much a muddle as the aged trees
Whose branches burst with blinding green each spring.

* * *

I love the palaces of iron and stone
That proudly lift their heads to look upon
The havoc and the evil they have wrought,
On small black shops already near their doom,
Whose modest wares lie hidden from the street
Behind an old curved window, tightly closed.
I love the houses, russet-brown with smoke,
Which men pull down with eager cruelty
—With willing wanton hands that pick and pluck
Old sagging papers from dismantled walls—
That show their silly cornices of plaster
Display their dreary marbled fire-places
In all their shocking nudity, like Noah
The laughing-stock of gay and growing streets,
The broken doll's house of a growing child—
This is the crushing of the old ideals,
The end of what our fathers dreamt so fair.

London.

I love to live where wealth and slums conjoin
To show their vivid tragic artistry:
The beggars watching motor-cars roll by,
The shaking houses where the traffic winds
Its endless shambling errand for the town—
Its rolling echoes deep as muffled drums
Yet eager, with a searching strident note.

I love the narrow streets towards the east,—
The streets with stalls of flowers, and eatables
Smelling of gardens, orchard-farms and downs,
With stalls of crockery and handkerchiefs
All slashed with Paisley Indian designs
And whelks piled high upon a wheel-barrow
That almost smells of tar and salt and sea;
The women with strange brightly-coloured shawls,
The Europeans, Jews, and coster-carts.

I love the broader streets which yet are poor,
With frightening alleys leading out of them;
The broad streets planted with young trees nigh dead
And tall black lamp-posts that stand far apart
—As tall and black and proud as the police.
The uniform monotony is spoilt
By churches with queer ugly spires of stone
That offer future joy for present pain.
The painted trams pass with metallic clatter,

London.

The street is set with shops that smell of eels,
With hat-shops, full of gaudy-coloured hats
With dentists, pawn-brokers, and butchers' shops.
Strange Asiatic script is placarded
Against the yellow gloomy frontages,
Amongst which sometimes can be seen a break,
A red-tiled country cottage left behind,
Or crowded plaster palace where are shown
Strange crimes, where cowboys rescue girls,
Where forgers are discovered by police,
Where comic men collapse, and crush their hats:
The moving pictures,—peep-shows for the poor!

I love the business thoroughfares and roads
Where all the wealth of London circulates;
So full of people that at noon the streets
Are black,—an ant heap overturned;—at night
Deserted and forlorn as Babylon:
The streets, plane-planted, where the poor can see
The royal processions and their progresses;
Where feathered ladies drive to Drawing-Rooms.
Where all is ugly, calm and feelingless.—

I love the height of that cathedral tower
Whose solemn lovely vaults of yellow brick
Are strewn, confetti-like,—with marbles rare.

London.

I love St. Paul's proud air of isolation—
So distant and aloof and grandiose—
That gloomy bulk of sombre ink-black stone—
Yet sear'd by shadows white as driven snow.
I love the wistful monument to Albert—
Whose glowing Gothic colours gaze across
Toward the classicism of the Concert-hall.
I love the Park, its vivid summer flowers,
Its crowd of silly people smartly dressed;
And, standing grouped about the other end,
The beggars and deported aliens
Who listen to a crazy clergyman,
Unbalanced politician, or to those
Who sing the patent virtues of a pill,
Or hear the views of some poor pale Hindu
Explaining theories to a scoffing crowd
Or mock the Bacchic singing of some sect
Who hymn the Almighty in a ragtime strain—
A sect of sallow women, spectacled,
Of men with faces earnest and unshaved.
I love Park Lane and its inhabitants,
Its oriental curious pageantry.
I love the Regent's houses and his Arch,
Buckingham Palace, Selfridge's, the Mint,
The Tower of London and the beefeaters,
Cleopatra's Needle and the blind poor man

London.

Who stands in Piccadilly all day long.
I love the country perfume of the carts
That thunder down our streets each early morn,
Watched by those sad unhappy things of Night,—
That wretched, lowly, undiscovered race
Who pace the pavement all their fevered lives.
I love the Embankment and its thin poor trees;
The scaffolding, the cranes, and the cement
Which will one day form beauteous Palaces.
I love Black-friars, the noise from Waterloo,
Somerset House, Savoy Hotel; the grounds
In which the water-gate stands put away.

I love the Adelphi Terrace and its view.
I love Trafalgar Square, its Landseer Lions,
St. Martin's in the Fields, and Charing Cross;
The busy roaring traffic of the Strand.

* * *

I love the silly pleasures of the rich;
The shops that sell unheard-of novelties.
I love the Docks and all their merchandise,
The Lascars and the Chinamen; the quays,
The public-houses and the rich hotels
The music-halls and theatres and the queues
That wait like flunkeys on prosperity.
How I love London and its daily life,
The very blood and heart-beat of the world.
London!

THE ALIEN.

A PETAL drifted loose
From a great magnolia bloom,
Your face hung in the gloom,
Floating, white and close.

We seemed alone; but another
Bent o'er you with lips of flame;
Unknown, without a name,
Hated—and yet my brother.

Your one short moan of pain
Was an exorcising spell;
The devil flew back to hell;
We were alone again.

BY THE FIRE.

WE two sit by the fire,
While haunting devils of beauty laugh
And dance fantastic as sunlit motes
And spin like a whirlwind of winnowed chaff—
A swift bright tumult of notes.
And we two sit by the fire,
Sit and drowse like sleeping dogs
In the equipoise of all desire,
Cradled warm 'twixt thought and will,
And always behind the music sounds the still
Small hiss and whisper of green logs
Slow-burning on the fire. . . .
Like the sound of water falling far away,
A little wind-blown falling stream,
A thin grey ghost in a world of grey
Mist and mountains. A white steam
And a smoke as blue as distance rise
From the damp hissing logs that show
A glimpse of the red fire below.
Two candles watch with tireless eyes
While we sit drowsing, drowsing by the fire.

By the Fire.

Dimly I know there exists a world,
That there is time, perhaps, and space
Other and wider than this place,
Where, at the fire side drowsily curled,
We sit and listen to the music's flow
And the hiss of the logs, and watch the flames
Burn on unblinking. And I know as well
That there are other people and their names
Go echoing through my brain from cell to cell,
Like the changingly reverberated shout
Of waiters mournful along corridors:—
But no one carries the orders out
And the names (dear friends, your name and yours)
Are words evoking nothing. Here I sit
By the fire and on the other side are you;
That is enough and nothing else is true—
The moving world and the friends that lived in it;
They are all shadows, you alone remain,
Real and embodied in this drowsing room.
With music scattering in bright golden rain
And candles staring into the gloom.

PRIVATE PROPERTY.

ALL fly—yet who is misanthrope?—
The actual men and things that pass,
Jostling, to wither as the grass
So soon: and—be it heaven's hope,
Or poetry's kaleidoscope,
Or love, or wine, at feast, at mass—
Each has a paradise of glass
Where never a yearning heliotrope
Pursues the sun's ascent or slope;
For the sun dreams there and no time is or was.

Like fauns embossed in our domain,
We look abroad, and our calm eyes
Mark how the goatish gods of pain
Revel, and if by grim surprise
They break into our paradise,
Patient, we build its beauty up again.

ALDOUS HUXLEY.

SOCIAL AMENITIES.

I AM getting on well with this anecdote,
When suddenly I recall
The many times I have told it of old
And all the worked up phrases and the dying fall
Of voice, well timed in the crisis, the note
Of mock-heroic ingeniously struck—
The whole thing sticks in my throat,
And my face all tingles and pricks with shame
For myself and my hearers.
These are the social pleasures, my God!
But I finish the story triumphantly all the same.

THE LIFE THEORETIC.

WHILE I have been fumbling over books
And thinking about God and the Devil and all,
Other young men have been battling with the days,
And others have been kissing the beautiful women:
They have brazen faces like battering-rams.
But I who think about books and such—
I crumble to impotent dust before the struggling,
And the women palsy me with fear.
But when it comes to fumbling over books
And thinking about God and the Devil and all,
Why, there I am!
But perhaps after all the battering-rams are right. . . .
God knows.

ALDOUS HUXLEY.

SIESTA THOUGHTS.

OH, these distressing heavy lunches . . .!
They tend to ecstasy—ecstasy reversed
When from soul the body stands
Triumphantly apart.
Oh, Afternoons, Afternoons. . . .
Snug rectories where no foot crunches
The sleek gravel except the pad-paws of baboons,
Black and hairy curates dressed
In ecclesiastical frock coats
And dog-collars.
Oh Afternoons, Afternoons . . .!
I must take to eating bread and jam again.

FAREWELL TO THE MUSES.

MY typewriter has been writing crookedly
For a very considerable time.
It is so hard to write in metre and in rime
With a typewriter that writes crookedly.
Lines should look clean and decent to the eye,
And mine have ceased to do so. And so that is why
I am ceasing to be a poet. . . .
Because my typewriter writes so exacerbatingly,
So distressingly crookedly.

ALDOUS HUXLEY.

RETROSPECT.

LOOKING from the midway crest of my course
Back to where, at twenty-two,
I act my present *tour de force*
Of tragi-comedy, what view
Will my ripe and fate-endoctrined wisdom take
Of all the odd grimaces that now I make?

Shall I see, memorially, Leicester Square
Peopled with many blanks and one clear figure
Combining comically the air
Of a tipsily priapic First Grave-Digger
With the hatred and remote disdain
Expressed by the Prince of Denmark's smile
For a world too sunk in its own flesh, too vile
To feel or understand the pain
Of doubting . . . doubting whether anything's worth while?

Retrospect.

And shall I see the full ingenuousness
Of my dropped jaw and still incredulous eyes,
When, wondering at the mildness of my surprise,
I murmured, 'What? Only this, no more than this?'
At my first school-boy's caning, my first kiss,
My first true passion perfect made,
Consummate now in flesh. 'What, nothing more?
Is it only this?' I thought, and was afraid
Something was left undone, and swore
The poets lied . . . little suspecting then
That 'only this' would grow my everything,
Grow to an all devouring love, which missed
Should prove incomparable pain.

Shall I resist,
Snug forty then, the pleasure of bantering,
Drolling a little with the present me
About those fears and jealousies and doubts,
Those rages and the aguish trembling bouts
Of overmastering desire, when she
Was absent? Oh how long will it last?

Oh yes, decidedly,
Having a sense of humour and a past.
One will amuse oneself, decidedly . . .!

VALEDICTORY.

I HAD remarked—how sharply one observes
When life is disappearing round the curves
Of yet another corner! . . . a chapter done,
Ended in blank with not a hope in sight
Of a new scroll beyond the colophon—
I had remarked, when it was Good Luck and Good Night
And A Good Journey To You, on her face
Certain enigmas penned in the hieroglyphs
Of that half frown and queer fixed smile and the trace
Of clouded thought in those brown eyes
Always so happily clear of hows and ifs—
My poor bleared mind!—and haunting whys.
There I stood, holding her farewell hand,
(Oh I was pressing my life and all
My being into that good-bye, pressing them small
And smaller, till, hey presto! there I'd stand
Dead, when they vanished with the sight of her.)
And I saw that she had grown aware,
Queer puzzled face! of other things
Beyond the present and her own young speed;

Valedictory.

Of yesterday and what new days might breed
Monstrously, when the future brings
A charger with your late lamented head ;
Aware of other people's lives and will,
Aware, perhaps, aware even of me. . . .
I seemed to see a joyous hope of it. But still
I pitied her, for it was sad to see
A goddess shorn of her divinity.
In the midst of her speed she had made pause ;
And doubts with all their threat of claws,
Outstripped till now by her unconsciousness
Had seized on her ; she was proved mortal now.
' But you should only live. You were meant
Never to know a thought's distress,
But a long glad astonishment
At the world's beauty and your own.
I pity you, dear goddess, grown
Perplexed and mortal.'
But can it truly be
That she is aware, perhaps, aware even of me ?

And life recedes, recedes ; the curve is bare,
My handkerchief flutters blankly in the air ;
And the question rumbles in the void,
Was she aware, was she after all aware ?

TAHITI.

WHEN the hood of night comes on the land
My ship is rocked by the sunset wind—
Shrill voices from the town
Cleave the air like darts;
When they sing in chorus
It were as if steel arrows of the day,
The showers of rain, rebounded to the dome of air.
When one alone shouts loud, his jaggèd voice
Blares like a trumpet. Banjos and drums
Beat, twang, and throb hysterically
Outside the mud-built huts.

Far off, the sun, caught spider-like
In its cloud-web, is seething down the sea
And churns the waves, spatters them with blood.
Despairingly it waves red tentacles, clutching
Fiercely each wool-white wave crest, then splutters out—
Ashore, the tall trees flap their foliage,
Cut out like stage-trees carved in canvas;—
The leaves whip the trees, as ropes flick the masts
Of every salt-fed ship.

Tahiti.

Then the hood of night comes lower, and from the shore,
The Babel grows.
—I dream that I too, sing—
Lanterns are lit,—great stairs of light
Shake in the water;
All dank and wet I seem to climb,
Swaying on soundless gold—go silently
Above the land, unto the distant moon,
Alone, and ringing clear as a bell.

It is a gong, beaten by the drunkard clouds
Which reel on the horizon, and by the echoing laughter of the stars.
—Even the sound dies now, and the white bubble,
Drop of milk, seems to feed
And love whole worlds, turning gold to silver,
All ugliness to beauty.

I.

BARREL-ORGANS.

RIVER-LIKE, this cold quick wind
Swirls and eddies down the street.

In the wide level of the sounding sea
Sudden pitfalls gape:
Deep-laid traps for ships,
Great seething hollows, mirrors for the sky,
Blue deep chasms flecked with red and gold
Blown with foam, and live
With salt-stiff'd sails and sailors' bodies,
Golden treasures and forsaken ships.—
And in these hungry seething deeps there lies
The fleeting wild reflection of the skies.

So in the steady flow of wind
That swirls and eddies down the street
All sense and sight
All sound and sorrow
Revolve around us here:—
Fly straight as arrows to this spot
And fall around us.—

Barrel-Organs.

The jaggèd stones are live with sound,
And one can hear the shuffling feet on them
Tread low, monotonous, inevitable—
Vast armies marching down the corridors of Time.
Oh! how this music throbs
And lifts our bodies from the street!

Squat chimneys rattle and revolve
And you can hear
The weathercocks fly helter-skelter.—
Tall drink-shops with bedizened fronts
Decked out with golden letters;
Inside them voices raised in quarrel
Seem in an instant to jump nearer
For the swing-doors with frosted glass
And bars so thick they seem to guard a treasure
(Not screen drab ugly drink),
Fly open with a squirt of yellow light
Which only shews with emphasis
The dust and crumbling paper in the gutter.
A love-sick ballad with a chorus,
The snarl and tin-tongued tremolo of tenors
With mellow, even-toned basses
Make the blind and beer-daft beggars
Stamp their feet and swing their arms in unison,
So they forget the cold and hungry vigil for a ha'pence.

Barrel-Organs.

The doors swing to, and there is no more light.
The darkness throbs around one like the pulse
Within a frightened animal.

On either side stretch archways
Deep like sleep and hopeless as the sea.—
A drunkard shuffling his slipshod feet
Towards his dreary starving home,
Sings in an even yellow voice:
Sings of pleasures he has never tasted,
But sings with full conviction.
The shop-signs creak and rattle in the wind
And from far-off a clock strikes (half-heartedly.)
The passage of the hours is uniform;
They glide together like the tapping of a drum.—
Our lives are but as sand within the hour-glass:
One half is up, the other down.
So,—like the ever shifting sea
Devouring misery eats up
All the inroads of prosperity—
Just as the fangs of seething foam
Which race and slide o'er the tawny sand
Are quick withdrawn by the immutable tides.—
The moon, young light-haired shepherd
Has but to lead away his star-fed flocks
The wool-white foaming breakers of the sea,
Then pasture them again;—

And when he rests behind those thyme-clad hills, the clouds,
To see the homing stars, striped honey-bees,
And shuns the sun-god's ravenous embrace,—
Without a sight of him, the dragon-writhing foam
To the gentle piping of his wind-stopped flute
Draws back again.—
Our lives are short,
And do we differ but by our degrees of misery.
We have a solace.—Listen then :

II.

SONG.

THE FEATHERED HAT.

OH! how this music throbs and lifts our feet!
That day the sky was molten gold,
The wide fresh-smelling Earth was dancing
Beneath the glittering sun-shafts.—
One side, the street was dark,
As deep and cool as water-wells,
The other was ablaze with light:—
Great bars, feet thick, shot down
Between the Sun's hot eyelashes;
Motors with their rush and whirr
Shot into heated glamour, then came
Black and dull, alternately,
Between these blazing shafts of heat.
The organ plays a slow and measured waltz.
I had my best hat with the feathers on it;
My boots were thick with dust,
I held up my skirt and swayed,
Could not dance, the heat was such.

The Feathered Hat.

I moved so slow, grew tired and more tired,—
Could think of nothing.
Then of a sudden came the syncopation ;
It seemed to clutch my heart,
My nerves came strung like banjo-strings—
I seemed to twang them with my hands and toes,
My heavy boots throbbed like catapults a-shooting!—

Reverberate thud of thunder-drops,
Shafts and chasms of blinding light
Cavalry gallop of falling leaves
Crackle and spark of shooting stars.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

THE white nightingale is hidden in the branches
And heavy leafage of the clouds.
She pours down her song—
Cascades threaded like pearls,
And the winds, her many-noted flutes
Flood forth their harmony.—
But the Earth turns away
Swinging in its air and water-rocked cradle.

SOLILOQUY AND SPEECH FROM 'THE MAYOR OF MURCIA.'

I.

SOLILOQUY.

THE shifting sand lies flat and high
As the stand from which an orator
Sees each human head, a petalled flower
Turning towards the Sun its benefactor.
All this I must destroy;
Beating to a metal disc
Each feeling flower, to carve it
To the leer of cunning, clutch of greed,
Or smile of sacrifice.
I stand here now:
This crowd it seems my duty to command
Is still afar off. Yet the sea
Is here for me to practice on:
Each wave, a hoary head
Nigh tumbling from its long bent body;
Each head with white hair blown by my mouthpiece

Soliloquy and Speech.

The lean, hard-fingered wind—
Grown old because its thirsty hands
Can never span a shape whose bulk
Will stop and give it nourishment.
So the insensate sea strives on;
And when the far wine-stainèd breath
Of the Sun panting after his horses,
Cools the beard and stops the sea-god's conch—
Then in fury all the mermen
Thrash their tails and beat their fins together.
Always clamour, rattling of pebbles, strife,
And the greedy gaping of the quicksands.
Now as the shadow of a frown
On the face of God
Is shown by the darkening of a waving cornfield,
So, as night damps the gilt glory of the Sun
As he stoops like a husbandman to till the Earth,
Mighty sweat pouring from under his gorgeous turban of cloud,
The whole great Earth heaves a sigh
And all the blossoms of the foam draw in their heads,
All the harvest of the untilled sea folds itself to sleep.

Then from far off the town
Raises its domes and spires—they seem
A troop of elephants with glittering eyes of glass
And swaying castles on their backs:

Soliloquy and Speech.

The whole town sways towards me
Pouring out its people,
Who gather in the streets, march on:—

Hubbub throb of drums,
Clangour and thrash of bells,
And the measured march
And stamp of feet;—
A crash of movement
On four short notes:
Gestures of a marionette
For either arm and both his legs—
And trumpet-calls
Forked and quick as lightning.—
The crowd all gay with colour
Blown along the road
Like confetti when a wedding's over.
Bars of colour, streaks of colour
And sharp notes like a rapier's thrust.
And the fevered clanging of the bells
Rings out still more and more:
Cataracts, curved blades of steel
Falling
down
down
Through ice-cold caverns:

Soliloquy and Speech.

The clash of shields
When ship meets ship
And the fighters leap from boat to boat,
The sea tossing her blue shoulders
And the spray running salt unaccustomed tears
Down each eager face.

The whole wide Earth trembles and totters
With the stamp of myriad feet:
The fret and fury of a mighty army
Following the foe through a level land.
Swift as Eagles the Saracen horse
Fled my army through the sun-scorched sand.
The furious trampling of horses stirred the desert
Making the sand ring like a trumpet,
Echoing the hoots, the howls, the heavy stamp of hooves
Raising hurricanes of dust to hide the stars,—
Wind-riven curtains of sand
To hide those whirling dancers from our sight.
My mind now hovers like a vulture
Seeing down-stretched before him
Dim valleys filled with memories,
High peaks enreddened by the sunset fires
And gloomy depths, clothed black
Beneath the coverlet of sleep, forgetfulness.

And now I hover like this vulture

Swimming 'gainst the star-strewn spaces of the wind:
Or like a rock stand undismayed
The peals, the clattering throbs, and splash of foam
From all this sea of upturned heads
And bodies all poignant with colour:
Great waves of sun-touched dyes
As brilliant, swift, and shrill
As when the Sun with gorgeous fingers
Plucks the watery thrill of music
From the star-high lyre
That echoes from the clouds
To touch the Earth all resonant
With rippling carillons of rain.
And now I have to speak,—
Explain the objects we 're assembled for.

II.

THE SPEECH.

'Citizens of Murcia, slaves to these,—
By my command you 're gathered here.
I see on every forehead lines of care;
Each body's bowed and worn with toil.—
For many years you've laboured,
Tilled and reaped your harvests—
Golden corn and vine-clusters
Ripened with the sun's red blood,

And when the burning hours are dead,
Refreshed with crystal emanation—
Dew from the hidden stores
Of water in the Earth's black gaping chasms.
So in the steady pageantry of years
You 've garnered treasures
Wealth to deck and glorify our town.
One part
Of this, our solemn duty
You've already done.
Great girdling walls
Which circle round the town
Keep off our foes—a casque of steel
Upon a warrior's head keeps off all blows
As lustily as these star-aspiring towers.
And in the evening the droning bells
Which call to prayer, re-echo
From the walls, and peal aloft among the towers,
As in the forest on a summer's evening
The tall trees are rudely stirred
By rush of wingèd insects
Intent upon their honeyed business.
Our walls, then, rise triumphant
And we can turn our energies to other fields.—
The plain here stretches many a mile
Between the town and tawny mountains ;

Soliloquy and Speech.

The far hills seem battlements
Of austere hostile towns—and nearer
The clouds hang low like beauty-drugged butterflies
Above the flowering fields.
Let us girdle the Earth with our handiwork,
Bind the blue hills with our strength ;
The firmament shall know our might and skill.
Broad roads shall cross the plains
Cleave the gold harvest at their will
And clamp the hills down with their might.
From the high towers of Murcia
The roads shall seem like fluttering pennons
Tied to lances pointing at the stars—
And we will dig canals to bring
The sea's salt breath into the land
And heap her shimmering treasures
On quays deep-laden with the glittering corn-sheaves ;
So then with holds replenished
Our galleons shall sail the seas
To distant towns afloat above the tawny sands
Like fleets at anchor—
And when it's evening
No sound shall mar the cool canals
But they shall stretch like weighty drag-nets
And in each mesh you'll see the moon

Soliloquy and Speech.

All silver like a draggled scale
Left shimmering amid the drying nets.'

Now the thin air was torn with cheers
And the fiery fountains of the mayor's speech
Had set afire the gaping listeners ;
The swirling smoke of words
Had blinded every citizen
To sober hard reality.—
Great thoughts, those striding bridges
Athwart the crystal chasms of our dreams,
Seemed like accomplished facts
And on the prancing horses of ambition
Each conscience leaps the river
That runs between the thought and fact accomplished.

TRUMPETS.

WOVEN from the tangled hair of comets
On the never-ceasing shuttles of the wind,
Night, thick Tabernacle for the sun, is pitched;
And from the deepening gloom
Ring out the trumpets
Red and quick as sparks
Before the vivifying camp-fire of the Gods.

* * * *

The blare of a Trumpet is brazen, fierce
As the culminate charge that decides a battle.—
Great plumes like clouds wind-riven
Float behind each fighter,
And their armour glints and gleams in the Sun.—
The horses hooves beat loud, insistent,—
As ominous and dire as kettledrums;
The whole Earth's expectant.
And the fields stretch green-metallic
As the leaden-plated sky;—far off
Small windows, kissed by the Sun's red lips
Send back a shuddering echo
To the blare of trumpets.
The cottage smoke, so stiff and regular
Goes creaking through the painted air
And everything is waiting
Watching in uncertainty.

A DREAM.

I WANDER forth along the riverside
While down the stream a thousand barges glide
In the wan amber sun of autumntide.
I only tread the path: all else beside
Between the margins of the river wide
Before the current glide.

And I too sometimes in my wandering seem
To ride like any other on the stream
Beneath the pale sun's last forlornest beam.
I cannot say if this should be but dream.
Or am I shepherd, while all these my team
Float on the stream?

'TILL THE MORN BREAK.'

HE tried to make a softer song, and lighter than the Spring's,
He tried to dance with feet that should be nimbler than the wings
Of the blackbirds in the garden, of the swallows o'er the pool,
Of the may-fly living daily to a sudden grave and cool.

He sat beside the willows when the afternoon was over
Amid the drooping meadow-sweet, and willow-herb and clover,
But how could he be making songs and dances when the moon
Descended to the meadow's bosom, dancing to no tune?

And how could he be making dance and music, when the sky
Was like a purple ocean, where the wind was never high
But blowing gently, gently, and the shuddering stars were dim
Behind the silent moon-haze with the moon upon its rim?

O how would he be singing when he had no call to sing?
And how would he be dancing when he heard no music ring?
I bade him wrap his body warm and drop his tired head,
And let the morrow-morning shine upon an empty bed.

IN NASSAU.

I.

ALL down the somnolent street where pale tinged houses dream
The niggers go, black faces crowding together ;
And between the palm leaves dancing with lethargic gestures,
The bright long water spreads, green as a parrot's wing—
We have rest here and a monotony of wheels,
A peaceful noise like bees that moan in June—
And the sun rusts not, but his brazen heraldries
Tarnished with evening are burnished with the dawn.
But pain comes stabbing in the night with silver knife through the window,
A blanched moon full of fear and the burden of desire—
And nothing rids us utterly of grief,
We who have pilgrim souls that will not sleep.

II.

Moonlight planting the world with lilies, so hushed it seems and scented,
But in the chapel is a droning where the niggers chant their hymns
And we in aureoled loneliness go down the street contented,
With hearts that beat for pleasure to the rhythm of our limbs.

BLACK VELVET.

THE darkness of the trees at deep midnight,
And sombreness of shadows in the lake;
A mountain in the starlight wide awake
Dreaming to Heaven with imperial might
Of lifted shoulders, huge against the bright
Bespattered jewelry of stars—The ache
Of silence, and the sobbing tides that break
From music. Slumbering cities—Candle light
Snuffed in the flooding darkness, and the train
Of Queens that go to scaffold for a sin—
Or splash of blackness manifest of pain,
Hamlet among his court, a Harlequin
Of tragedies . . . Mysterious. . . . And again
Venetian masks against a milky skin.

MYSELF IN THE CITY.

WINDING down the street in wearied gait, the barrel-organ dribbles out its song
Merged with the thud of feet forever dallying indifferent and indefinite along.
The houses stood like rows of cripples, some paralysed, some hunch-backed and some bent with age,
They seemed at war, their chimneys threatening, their brows hung heavy in a sombre rage.
Crab-like the children crawled, while always hammering above their heads the scolding shrewish tongue ;
They grew as bloodless flowers unflourishing, waxen and pale from out the dust and dung.
And one could see the strip of sunset fluttering, even as washed-out rags upon the line,
And one could hear the sparrows twittering, and the hours ticking in a slow decline.
Then beaded on the hem of evening, the coloured lights were threaded here and there,
Till proud with sweets and plumes and oranges, the shops grew brilliant in the tinsel glare.
Grey was the death-bed of the twilight, shuddering the faint hands of the day stretched to the night

Myself in the City.

Fending it off, or feebly wavering, over the pallid glints of stolen light.
And grey the faces that were gathering among the fallen ashes of the day,
And red the faces, yellow, flickering, under the lamps upon the long highway.
And some were gashed with smiles, and quaint grimaces of hate and pain and hunger and despair,
And some wore coloured hats and meek frivolities, limp ribbons and false pansies, in their hair,
And all were cold, and all seemed passionless, there shone no zest or splendour in their lives,
Nor hope in anything but holidays, or watching funerals, or taking wives.—
I dared not think, for truth rose horrible, slapping the face with coarse uncaring hand,
But like them cheated into merriment, I wilfully refused to understand ;
Turned me away from wan-eyed poverty, trod pity underfoot, oh, danced on grief,
Bade the crowd sing and fill my desolation, bade them be glad and hide my disbelief,
Whirl me down the tide where there's no tarrying, sweep me in the long river of the road.
They do not fear the end of vanity, they look to heaven for their last abode ;

Myself in the City.

They do not care, but live their miseries, as I, for there is nothing else to do.
And so I passed on, tired and visionless, and shook the dust prophetic from my shoe.

Strange we so love the world,—for presently, out of my window looking on the city,
I blessed the night, and the roofs slumbering all huddled, and I felt nor shame nor pity
That all the ships of life are harbourless, and all the winds unkind and all the waves
Bent to obliteration for eternity, and all their billows little hollow graves :—
But only breathed the air, intensified by the ascending breath of million lungs,
And heard the labouring metropolis, quickened by whisper of a million tongues.
And felt a king of splendid loneliness, and felt an atom of the peopled spaces,
And felt again my lordly egoism, one face distinct among the blur of faces.

IMPOSTURE.

THE adored, wild, strange, irresistible,
How they fail one at the last!

What is there in your faces
That we should worship with our souls?
Most lovable, perfidious,
Vague—
Molesting even in our visions
With treacherous pathos.
O vulgarity, mediocrity, stupidity,
What is it in you that makes us lavish our love,
Covering your meagre bodies
With our passionate mantle, dyed with blood and dreams?
Life and its grey days, and time
Are a thin curtain through which you shadow,
Or a dim glass through which you peer.
You climb in at the windows of our souls
With ladders and stratagems,

Imposture.

You mope in corners with reproachful eyes.
But what do you do for us
Lute players, dancers, deceivers,
Other than lie with red lips
And cajole with tears of beryl ?
People—
Men and women with laughable tragic faces
Winking at love,
Treading our songs and illusions
Under petulant feet !

AS A NUN'S FACE.

AS a nun's face from her black draperies
So full of mystery the moon looks down.
She dreams of a passion that shall outlive time,
Of Beauty's face beheld unveiled and close,
Of God Who blows the worlds like bubbles up,
Smiling alway, to watch them swell and die.
She dreams of music played among the stars
When the slow tongues of silence are unloosed.
Above the city and its faltering candles,
Above the jostling head of man she moves
Strange as a dreamer walking in her sleep.

OPTIMISM.

WHAT will happen to the beggar, and the sinner, and the sad,
And the drunk that drinks for sorrow, and the maimed, and mad;
What will happen to the starving, and the rebel run from drilling,
Cowardly, afraid of fighting, and the child who stole a shilling?
They shall go to prison black
With a striped shirt on the back,
Feast on bread and water there
In a cell, without a care.
They shall learn at least their duty,
Never tempted more of beauty—
They shall walk in rows and praise the Lord,
And one or two shall hang upon a cord—
And two or three shall die of grief alone—
(And this is well, for sinners should atone),
And five or six shall curse the God that made them,
(And this is wicked, for the priests forbade them),
And those that grew from dust shall go to dust
Downtrodden. Saith the preacher: 'God is just.'

QUESTION.

AND afterwards, when honour has made good,
And all you think you fight for shall take place,
A late rejoicing to a crippled race;
The bulldog's teeth relax and snap for food,
The eagles fly to their forsaken brood,
Within the ravaged nest. When no disgrace
Shall spread a blush across the haggard face
Of anxious Pride, already flushed with blood.

In victory will you have conquered Hate,
And stuck old Folly with a bayonet
And battered down the hideous prison gate?
Or will the fatted gods be gloried yet,
Glutted with gold and dust and empty state,
The incense of our anguish and our sweat?

BALLAD.

MANY things I'd find to charm you,
Books and scarves and silken socks,
All the seven rainbow colours
Black and white with 'broidered clocks.
Then a stick of polished whalebone
And a coat of tawny fur,
And a row of gleaming bottles
Filled with rose-water and myrrh.
Rarest brandy of the fifties,
Old liqueurs in leather kegs,
Golden Sauterne, copper sherry
And a nest of plover's eggs.
Toys of tortoiseshell and jasper,
Little boxes cut in jade;
Handkerchiefs of finest cambric,
Damask cloths and dim brocade.
Six musicians of the Magyar,
Madness making harmony;
And a bed austere and narrow
With a quilt from Barbary.

Ballad.

You shall have a bath of amber,
A Venetian looking-glass,
And a crimson-chested parrot
On a lawn of terraced grass.
Then a small Tanagra statue
Found anew in ruins old,
Or an azure plate from Persia,
Or my hair in plaits of gold;
Or my scalp that like an Indian
You shall carry for a purse,
Or my spilt blood in a goblet . . .
Or a volume of my verse.

THE SOLDIERS.

AT first with fruit and flowers and drink
They went, libated; festal day
When demigods in columns swing
Amid the maniac mob. I saw
Massed women singing at the quay
Songs of their land, ere the high ship
Crept hooting out to sea. And then
How one would crowd to watch a squad
Catching the snap and unity
Of drill, at practice days afield
Invading hidden villages
In laps of downs. They, still unwhipped,
Plod on obediently to death
Without the cheering and the praise
Hysteric meed of yesterday;
A soldier's such a common thing,
Besides two years of war have taught
The people it's the soldiers' job
To stop a bullet: why then spoil
With praise for what must needs be done?
Rather, suggest their aim and place:—
'Go, and get killed perhaps, but go!'

The Soldiers.

Now, when the last weals of the scourge
Are whole upon us, when once more
Industrial England clanks her wheels
And pistons, and the splendid course
Of strikes, lockouts, trade bickerings
Shews superb pageant to the world,
The soldiers will not be: erased
Amid the thoughts of busy men
The barrack walls will hide them; even
These monuments for the great dead
Hurrying clerks and labourers
With only eyes for clocks will pass.
Perhaps as in that troubled peace
Our citizens will stone such men
As kept their women from crude rape,
From all deaths and indecencies
Their children, and their goods from flame,
At least forgetfulness and ban
From gratitude is theirs; who wants
To fuss about a common clod,
A stupid sensual soldier?
Who (were again the sign of blood
Hoisted in heaven) as gladly would
Offer the casket of his soul
To tearing steel as now; 'Why all
He's fit for is wenching and bars

A caricature for music hall
And comic papers.'
One or two
Will not forget. They went with him
In rain and shadow: knew his guile
His vice and pluck: who daily met
Him verminous, him ware, him gruff
Watching how first dawn stood against
The trenches of his enemy:
Who stayed with him where dangers crashed
And whimpered, who beheld his eyes
Still angry, glaze, and all his face
Where not blood-brown, turn to the grey
Of useless clinker, raked and cooled,
Whose agony was his: they learnt
The soldier is a thorn of flesh
Grown hard by sweat and discipline,
No saint—we do not want them there,
No Cuchulain whose hero-light
Enaureoles him, but a dour man
Brother to hunger, cold, and fear,
Content to dirty work; content
To dirty death among the rats
If that is in his day's schedule.

THE GOSPEL OF CHIMNEYS.

HOW far the stour and reek of them
Who lift thereup all day
Beyond the woods, beyond the hills
This signal 'Come and pray.'
'Come and do worship at this church
All that have brain or thew,
Wide our unlovely precincts are
To hold the like of you.
In running belt and biting cog
Shall your salvation lie
Of furnace strength and skill at lathe
Spring your doxology.
The desk is mightier than the field
The pen most strong to save
Since who will dare to bondage there
He will not fear the grave.'

THE BULL.

NOW day, like a great white Bull
Shambles among the dewy corn
Massive limbed, and broad, and full
Two curves of the sun for horn,
Wingéd Bull Assyrian,
Twain blue wings that heaven span.

Woody plains and rivers slow
That with reeded whisper go
Down the nave of green willow
Through the poplar's portico
There the Bull of day must pass
Parting osiers, rustling grass.

LOW TIDE.

THE brown sand stretches away with shadows of purple and crimson
Bed to rest foam-frail limbs on, when sea babes tire in their play.
That sea the moon piles high far out where low waves clamber,
Ivory, jade, and amber, tumbling enormously.
They spit at one another, they howl like strange pied leopards
Whom she serenely shepherds, their mistress and their mother.
Cruelly out of the east to cut his pitted runes
On the dry sands of the dunes, and scatter the yellow yeast
From the slavering firth's grey lips, the mad wind griffin runs
To try conclusions with the black-hulled covey of ships
Wallowing out with coal from ports that are hard and bitter
As an ergastule fitter, to wear down body and soul.
But here the bay full of sand, with a brooding promontory
To guard its golden glory, obeys the time's command,
Follows the hissing storm in sinuous little runnels,
Spins in cone-shaped funnels, like a spirit taking form.
Under the massive sky, sword-white wings are wheeling
Terrible things revealing when they flash up and cry
Things for a second out, which scatter as quick and mingle
With the rasping of the shingle, the wind's hilarious rout;
Written in sand almost, but hastily trampled over
Where his swift feet cover the grass-bound arc of the coast.

CARCERI.

THE house was full of thick green light: I could
Not see the roof, but bold on either side
Obese black pillars 'ranged uneven, stood
For silent cruelty and lust and pride.
The whole place seemed sardonic. Far and wide
I searched, but saw no man, and heard no man,
I cast no shadow, made no patter, as I ran.

A door slammed down some gallery: the noise
As though a crowd repeated voice to voice
Giggling a bestial story. For a space
The echoes danced, but died: and in their place
The regular dull scream behind closed doors
Of one whose careful torture pleased the inquisitors.

THE PACK.

THEY fight upon the barrier; as flies
Do buzz and beat upon a pane, seeking
Any way out; they crawl upon each other
Like maggots, urged by one unslaked desire—
To eat. With little loosing they burst through,
At music chanced upon unknowingly
Of that potent and curious quality
To spring a lock: words in chance order put
Do the mechanic duty of a spell.
A ray of colour will break up a flaw
In the veil's fabric: then see them pouring through
Jostling, inhuman, blind to all but need
Burnt with appalling hunger, of no mind
With all our gentleness and chastity
Who have not yet been starving in thin hell.
These are the crooked ones, the curved moons
That in a man's body make him lunatic.
They are maimed to look upon, and featureless,
Grey, or faint blue, and whirling as they go,
More like pale cone-shaped toadstools in a wood
Which smell of dead man's flesh, than animal
And living things: whither they move they bring
Coldness and terror over everyone.

CARRY ON.

CARRY on! lash the gold flag of high holiday sound
To the masthead, and laugh at the throb and the sting
of the wound.
We are that island folk, glorious makers of war,
Frivolous, wasteful, the jesters at death. Others are
Shocked, or disgusted: God grant us the strength to maintain
Race-meetings up to good pitch for the crowd cheering mad
in the rain,
Velvet skinned horses with legs like a ripple of mirth
Whither our money is tossed from the ends of the earth.
Keep stubborn play in our prize-ring, white muscle and strong
Leads from a leopard-quick bruiser, sponge, towel, and gong,
Hounds in the kennel, dog-otter and fox in the field:
Give us a punt on the river, a tramp on the weald,
Open the flood gates, and let our humanity out,
Train loads that eat and fling bottles and jostle and shout
Roll with each other in orgiast love on the sand
Dance on the pier to the patriot bray of a band.
Yell on the gaudy nagged roundabouts snarling with mouths
Of the organ, shy cocoanuts, gape at the raucous untruths

Carry On.

A cheap-jack hands out with his watches, toy weighing machines
Painted red, or a shock from brass handles to tingle their skins,
Name-stamps, fags, vestas, and sweets for a penny in slot
Changing-hat parties portrayed at a tanner the lot;
Places to scribble our names on, seats, lamp-posts and walls,
Keep us agog for the grin of revue in our halls,
Girls to kick lustily high for the men in the stalls,
Lilt, the contagious refrains we can whistle or sing,
Smart business and patter to set the show off with a swing,
Give us our cinema show with its squeezing and fun in the dark
Essanay toddling buffoon or the tale of a saint and a shark
And the heroine rescued: then leave us an hour or two
To get drunk in when all the work's over and nothing to do.

Then for the swagger on Sunday, to rattle down street
Our bicycle snorting blue smoke, and a girl on the carrier seat:
Sparkle of glass and white linen in restaurant doors
Beautiful things calling out from shop windows and stores,
Laughter and noise on the pavements, the paper we snatch
From a boy in our haste to good dinner, the flowers in the park like a patch
Of blithe tapestry, haze of a cigarette, flame of a match.

Carry On.

To hell with the bomb or the bullet that brings you to dust!
Let us know joy while we can, and sorrow as soon as we must:
Live every man of us, drink of the froth and the fun,
Bring the torch down the last lap! carry on! carry on!

FROM THE BALCONY.

To Helen.

LAGOONS.

THE Night, a blue wave flashed from tropic seas,
Fills with a hollow sound that gourd the Sun—
Drifted along its waters: ripples run
Across the cities stilled with ecstasies.
And floating in those waters far away
Are syrens beautiful as swans a-drift—
Deep-mirrored multitudes; the heavens sift
Upon them watery atoms from the Day,
Till domes and towers like fiery suns are drowned
In subtle ripples of a sense like sound—
Striking the burning cities like a lyre,
And every wanderer seems a shaft of fire.

FROM THE BALCONY.

Like thirsty winds the cities dance and swoon
Amid the wine-stained mists of Carnival,
Where flower-fumed beams of the young lotus moon
Float. Towers like leaping gold flames fire the skies;
Faint sounds and perfumes, languorous flower-sighs
Dance in the evening air, in eddies fall.

From the Balcony.

The negress Night devours that gourd the sun—
Grown over-ripe, and lets the gold juice run
Staining her body; pelts with the hot rind
The gold processions as they dance and sway.
Then with a noise like fire, the Phœnix-wind
Of Night springs upward, blows the towers this way.

Multitudes.

Beneath the midnight skies, grown copper-cold,
On titan-stairways like the world's great cause
Unmeaning endlessness,—processions pause
In Babel-labyrinths, where huge cascades
Of diamond fall between vast colonnades
And diaper the floors with moons of gold.
Then floating onward, blown by winds of Chance,
They fade away like dust of Earth a-dance,
Strange sparks struck out by Time, the diamond dust
Of fountain-lighted groves, the golden must
Of vats of joy; and lights like maddened seas
Drown the bull-throated bellowing of these
With fading sounds unfolding like a rose:
Until the mists of joys and laughters toss
The moon like some too-careless rose let fall
From the blown hair of Night the Bacchanal.

A HISTRION.

From "*Women in War-Time.*"

WHEN death's hand wiped out my sun, I lay and watched
with open eyelids
While great waves of numbness rose and hid the universe
from sight:
I did not care, for when the eyes are blinded, little recks it
If the world goes reeling in the dust through darkness or
through light.

In the night-time, O the scream that tears my body into tatters,
Beats my brain to pulp:—but yet I cannot breathe it into air:
Dead my lips.—And anguish like a wind has set my body
running,
But my soul is broken,—cannot crawl to hide . . . I know not
where.

A Histrion.

Now I go dancing—dancing. To the crowd, as to a mirror
I posture, and I practise smiles that crack my face apart,
And I paint my cheeks blood-red; but when Night falls, to my reflection
I lay bare this empty hole that once had been a living heart:

Posture once more at my mirror: watch with interest my face alter
From the cracking smile, the mirth that wrapp'd my body like a shroud.
Yes, I watch the dreadful tears that bleed and sizzle from my eyelids:
And God knows if I'm acting to myself or to the crowd.

TWO ORCHARD POEMS.

To Osbert.

I.

THE SATYR IN THE PERIWIG.

THE Satyr Scarabombadon
Pulled periwig and breeches on :
'Grown old and stiff, this modern dress
Adds monstrously to my distress.
The gout within a hoofen heel
Is very hard to bear : I feel
When crushed into a buckled shoe
The twinge will be redoubled, too.
And when I walk in gardens green
And, weeping, think on what has been—
Then wipe one eye,—the other sees
The plums and cherries on the trees.
Small bird-quick women pass me by
With sleeves that flutter airily
And baskets glowing like a fire
With laughing fruits of my desire :

Plums sunburnt as the King of Spain,
Or gold-cheeked as a Nubian;
With strawberries all goldy-freckled,
Pears fat as thrushes, and as speckled.
Pursue them?—Yes, and squeeze a tear:
'Please spare poor satyr one, my dear.'
'Be off, sir; go and steal your own.'—
Alas, poor Scarabombadon!
They'd rend his ruffles, stretch a twig,
Tear off a satyr's periwig.'

II.

THE MUSLIN GOWN.

WITH spectacles that flash,
Striped foolscap hung with gold
And silver bells that clash
Bright rhetoric and cold,—
In owl-dark garments, goes the Rain,
Dull pedagogue, again.
And in my orchard-wood
Small song-birds flock and fly—
Like cherubs brown and good,
When through the trees go I

Two Orchard Poems.

Knee-deep within the dark-leaved sorrel,
Cherries red as bells of coral
Ring to see me come—
I with my fruit-dark hair,
As dark as any plum;
My summer gown as white as air
And frilled as any quick bird there.—
But oh! What shall I do?
Old Owl-wing's back from town;
He's skipping through my trees; I know
He hates my summer gown.

A SCENE FROM 'SAUL.'

AN UNFINISHED PLAY.

Saul, Atarah (mother of Saul and Tiras), Chorus.

Atarah.

They've blinded me.

Chorus.

Queen, old age clear and terrible as noon,
Thy face has gathered darkness from the heavens.

Atarah.

Pull down the heavens, seal mine eyes with night.
O! emptiness falls endlessly—they rock,—come down.
I had two eyes and she has blinded them—
Two breasts to feed the world. She hacked them off.
These were my sons, twin-born, my roots of life,
And she has torn my roots; I drift through space.

Chorus.

I would mine eyes were deeper than the sea
That I might weep; but God hath sealed my springs.

A Scene from 'Saul.'

(ENTER SAUL.)

Saul.

Cry, tear the fabric of the world with screams.
This whirlpool of my madness has sucked down
The palaces of light into its depths.
The pulsing earth is ashen black as night:
They say it is with drought,—old thirsty ape!
There is no thirst save in my empty veins.
She came, a snake, and stabbed my veins with love.
She changed me to a knife; I killed my brother.

Atarah.

You should have stabbed my womb, Saul, my son Saul.

Saul.

A cry went up, the weft of the world was riven.
Then silence filled my veins instead of blood.

Atarah.

My tongue is changed to dust, I fain would weep:
Only mine eyelids withered when Time died.

Saul.

God built a tower that reached to heaven's brink. . . .
But He hath blown on me,—I fall, I fall.

Atarah.

The gods are drunken with my lamentation;
And night invades my veins, and flows within
My body clothed with trembling, and my face
That hath grown blind and featureless as heaven.

A Scene from 'Saul.'

Chorus.

O thou art veiled with tears like some sad river.

Atarah.

The earth is broken down, is broken down.
The heavens die,—they melt away like Time.
I would the day grew blind before her birth—
The light a curse, to break the world's old womb
And mix her shape with dust before she lived
To melt my sons' blood to a smoke that died
Within the raging flame of their desire.
I would the chasms of the day and night
Were cumbered with the ruins of the heaven,
And light a rushing thunder, branding us
With blackness, sealing all the springs of life;
That Time were but a dew that fades away,
And life a veil the hate of God has riven,
And this dull house of clay wherein I dwell
Were broken like the earth, were spilt like rain.

Saul.

Crush down the beat of Time, O mighty God—
The pulse of youth, the veins of love and hate,
So I may hear the crying of her soul.
Cry, weep, for there is none to hear you now:
With those lips, red as hell, you burned the world.

A Scene from 'Saul.'

The light is dead, for with your long black hair
That twists and writhes like hell's long hissing river
You quenched the light. O you are very pale:
White with the dust of aeons is your face—
Things ground to powder by the mills of lust.
And I will sift your dust like whitened ash
From craters of my hate.—You looked at me . . .
My bones were water, and the world lay dead . . .
Oh, oh! The vast walls of the world gyrate—
Close in . . . They 'll crush my heart,—they 'll crush my heart.

Chorus.

Pull down the heavens like a sackcloth pall
To spread upon our faces, sealed with night.
Pull down the sun, and burn the fiery moon:
The fabric of the air is torn apart.
The world is dead. There is no world at all.
The light is dead. There shall be no more light.
Pull down the heavens like a sackcloth pall—
Crush down the beat of Time. It was my heart.

(PAUSE.)

Atarah.

The light is dead. The light is dead,—is dead.

CURTAIN.

MESSALINA AT MARGATE.

To Sacheverell.

THE tents are coloured like a child's balloons ;
They swell upon the air like August moons—
Anchored by waters paler than a pearl.
The airs like rain-wet shrinking petals curl

Beneath the rainbow lights of noon that fill
The open calyx with the faintest thrill,
Then break in airy bubbles on the sense
Like sounds upheld in exquisite suspense.

In grand toilette, and with a parasol
Bright-fringèd as the noonday sun, that fool
Of beauty,—Messalina promenades.
A crinoline keeps off the other shades ;

Her grape-black hair casts shadows deep as death :
All curled and high, yet stirring at Time's breath.
The powder on her face is shuddering-white
As dust of aeons seen in heaven's light.

She leaves the sands, where in tents striped like fruits
The dancers whirl like winds to airy flutes ;
And music, soother than the pulp of pearls
Whose sweetness decks the swan-white syren-girls,

Messalina at Margate.

In air-pale waves like water, has the sheen
Of mirrors, floats like flower-wing'd stars.—O spleen!
Leave Regent's Park and quit society
Only to find this immorality!

So now she goes to church, where bonnets steam
Like incense, and the painted windows seem
Nought but a coloured veil stupidity
Had wrought to clothe her dumb soliliquy:

'There's comfort in old age: the steam of food
Ascending like the rich man's soul to God;
And little words that crackle as they went,
How such and such a life was evil spent

Until they make a fire to warm our hands.
For Time has wrapp'd the heart in swaddling-bands
But yet they have not saved it from the cold.—
The soul's a pander too; for she has sold

My body to the Church; does nicely now.
O! soul has much to learn from flesh, I vow.'
Thus Messalina, grown both old and fat,—
The Church's parrot now, and dull at that.

THE COUNTY CALLS.

THEY came upon us like a train :
A rush, a scream,—then gone again.
With bodies like a continent
Encased in silken seas, they went,

And came, and called, and took their tea
And patronised the Deity
Who copies their munificence
With creditable heart and sense.

Each face, a plaster monument
Of some belovèd aliment
Whose everlasting sleep they deign
To cradle in the Great Inane ;

Each tongue, a noisy clockwork bell
To toll the passing hour that fell,
Each hat, an architect's device
For building churches, cheap and nice.

The County Calls.

I saw the County Families
Advance, and sit, and take their teas:
I saw the County gaze askance
At my thin insignificance,

While little thoughts like fishes glide
Beneath their eyes' pale glassy tide:
They said: 'Poor thing! we must be nice!'
They said: '*We know your father!*' twice.

E. WYNDHAM TENNANT.
(Killed in Action.)

THE MAD SOLDIER.

I DROPP'D here three weeks ago, yes—I know,
And it's bitter cold at night, since the fight—
I could tell you if I chose—no one knows
Excep' me and four or five, what ain't alive.
I can see them all asleep, three men deep,
And they're nowhere near a fire—but our wire
Has 'em fast as fast can be. Can't you see
When the flare goes up? Ssh! boys; what's that noise?
Do you know what these rats eat? Body-meat!
After you've been down a week, an' your cheek
Gets as pale as life, and night seems as white
As the day, only the rats and their brats
Seem more hungry when the day's gone away—
An' they look as big as bulls, an' they pulls
Till you almost sort o' shout—but the drought
What you hadn't felt before makes you sore.

This poem, written three months before the author's death in action, was not included in his *Worple Flit and other Poems* since it was not intended for publication. The editor, however, deems this example of his versatility too valuable to be lost.

The Mad Soldier.

And at times you even think of a drink . . .
There's a leg acrost my thighs—if my eyes
Weren't too sore, I'd like to see who it be,
Wonder if I'd know the bloke if I woke ?—
Woke ? By damn, I'm not asleep—there's a heap
Of us wond'ring why the hell we're not well. . . .
Leastways I am—since I came it's the same
With the others—they don't know what *I* do,
Or they wouldn't gape and grin.—It's a sin
To say that Hell is hot—'cause it's not :
Mind you, I know very well we're in hell.—
In a twisted hump we lie—heaping high
Yes ! an' higher every day.—Oh, I say,
This chap's heavy on my thighs—damn his eyes.

.....

June 13th, 1916.

KULTUR.

WE tracked Joy down upon the plain
We slew him in the light of day,
'Twas strange to see how very slow
That young life ebbed away.

Then through the long tormented weeks
We watched the snares that we had set
For Memory and that wild child
Of her's she named Regret.

At length the good snares held them fast
And helpless there the two did lie,
We had forgotten how to laugh
Or we had laughed to see them die.

We slew all living things we found,
We slew with eager, frantic haste,
Then sat us down and looked upon
The arid, trackless waste.

Kultur.

No bird now lived to tease our ears
With sounds of love and vain content,
No flower raised up a gentle head
To vex us with its useless scent ;

The world was barren as our souls
As far around as we could see ;
We said, ' We'll build our city here,
The City of Satiety.'

With skilful hands we raised the walls
So high, that neither moon nor sun
Could look within and see the things
Our weary minds would rest upon.

Within the shelter of the walls
We built our houses, tier on tier,
The narrow streets cut sharp between
Like sword-blades through the lifeless air.

There is no movement in the streets
There's neither light nor shadow there,
But motionless and blank they lie
Beneath the houses' vacant stare.

Kultur.

A pleasure house we built, wherein
Upon an instrument of wood
A puppet player moves his hands
And counterfeits the music 's mood ;

And there we fashioned images
With cunning joints of supple steel
To feign the pleasure and applause
Our empty souls no longer feel.

Upon the silent walls we placed
Great mirrors, where the endless show
Of puppet movements, joys and pains,
In mimic mute procession go.

And we who have no joys or needs,
No human pleasures, griefs or love,
Can see like dreams within a dream
The puppets in the mirrors move.

For us there is no sun nor moon,
But always in a dim grey shade
We sit, and watch reflections
Of the images we made.

AETAT 19.

1917.

GOOD it was to live, oh Lord,
Good it was to be young,
To feel the sap of the world's spring in my veins,
To feel the pulse of every happy, living thing
Throbbing in my blood.
Fair hopes and pleasant dreams were mine
Joy and the pride of youth,
No fears I had nor vain regrets
I walked in liberty.
Each lovely birth that consecrates the beauty of the spring,
Each lovely growth that spreads apace
To greet the dear sun's warmth
All living things I loved,
For I was young and happy too.

* * *

Now I lie with my fellows,
We hear the tramp o'erhead
Of men in thousands marching
As once we marched, the dead.

Aetat 19.

We know that they are reaping
Where we the dead did sow,
Our spirits rise to speed them
Our brothers, as they go.
We hear the living overhead
Where we lie side by side—
Dear Lord, Who gave us lovely life,
Forget not why we died.

SYMPHONY.

(La musique, virement des gouffres et chocs des glaçons aux astres.)

LIPS pressed close to warm lips
Our hearts beat to the swing of the world
As it rushes through space,
The stars sing a loud paean of love,
Vast harmonies crash in a multiform tumult,
Red planets a-wash on the tide of Infinity
Rock to the din.
As the sound surges past us
New wave forms within crested wave
And leaps onward ;
We sink for a moment
As downward it sweeps
With the music of whirling of bottomless gulfs,
Again upward it rushes
And dimly we hear
The clash of great icebergs against a star,
While Colour transcendent in turbulent flood
Hurls its spray on the white flaming shores of far suns.

Symphony.

We are tossed and upborne on the waves that are flung
By the music,
The rhythm, a ladder of gold for our hearts as they mount,
Spans eternity,
Guides our wild flight
Through this rapture of movement and sound.
As we feel its sure swaying
Still closer we cling,
The stars are beneath us,
The harmonies swell in a mad ecstasy,
Oh pulse of my life, press more closely to me.

CUL-DE-SAC.

THERE flickers one small yellow flame
Blown by a fretful breeze
That casts small shadows on the ground
To dance between the trees.

As some uncared-for, dusty shell
Still covers, hidden deep,
The murmur that a child once heard,
So the sad houses sleep

While hid within their leprous walls
That strike the heart with fear,
Move echoes of forgotten joy
None but the homeless hear.

Gaunt figures haunt the narrow street
And stoop to seek within
For what the day's poor comfort
May have dropped into a bin.

Cul-de-Sac.

Beneath the night's dark covering
These phantoms come and go,
More frail, unreal, and mournful
Than the shadows that they throw.

Like broken windows of a room
Where one is lying dead,
Their eyes gaze out upon the streets
The weary feet must tread.

For them the days are throbbing wounds,
Hard livid weals of light
The sun has raised upon the gloom
Of their eternal night ;

The city but a cavern, Man
Has tunnelled into space,
From whose high roof the mocking stars
Can watch each haggard face.

And so they flit by aimlessly
These outcasts from their kind,
And ever seek an outlet
Where no outlet is to find.

Cul-de-Sac.

Save where beneath a high blank wall
With shaken souls they see
Some useless clothes a shadow left
To hang upon a tree.

THE NUN.

I LOOK into your eyes
And see Eternity.
The past has left no shadows there,
No broken hopes
No shattered dreams
Waste wreckage of the barren years,
Cumber their depths.
No fevered, vain desires
Stretching towards the future
Cast clouds across their radiance.
Pure and unsullied
A mirror held in God's own hand,
They show me the reflection
Of the good hour that is,
In which your soul doth seek
Its perfect consummation.

SONG.

THINE is this hour
But mine the happy giving,
Mine the surrender and the pride of loss;
O reckless squandering
That gives uncounted treasure,
Oh lavish hour that beggars me,
O bliss beyond imagining.
Shod with soft meekness
Crowned with flaming pride,
This hour calls to Eternity,
Vanquishes Time.

PRESS NOTICES OF THE FIRST NUMBER.

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

Here we have a little troupe of nine singers, male and female. . . . They are none of them to be despised as verse writers; but they have not as a body very much in common.

The first five of them—Osbert and Edith Sitwell, Nancy Cunard, Arnold James and Iris Tree—certainly share a mood. They are, on the whole, dour and morose; they see nothing bright in the present, and no bright hopes in the future. Osbert Sitwell has grandiose and sinister visions, but in the description of them he tends to 'o'erleap himself'; he leaves an impression of not quite getting the effect he aims at. We should except, however, from this stricture 'Pierrot Old' and 'Night'—the latter a concise catalogue of darkling images from which one cannot escape. Dark and boding phantoms oppress the mind also of Nancy Cunard, who has not quite so fine an ear for phrase and rhythm as Mr. Sitwell. The deepening gloom of her little group of sonnets closes with a despairing gesture in two stanzas called 'From the Train.' Edith Sitwell we have met with before, and have yielded our tribute to the pitiless strength with which she probes human suffering or fashions nightmare shapes and fancies. Her 'The Mother' is a truly harrowing story, and 'Thaïs in Heaven' a shuddering piece of macabre. Arnold James has only three little pieces: he is gloomy, but one feels that one would like to hear more from him. Iris Tree is in a passion with the world. She voices, certainly with eloquence, a feverish desire to escape somewhere along 'the long road unto nothing' and a dolorous morbid hopelessness which, as a poetic *motif*, arouses rather pity than admiration.

All this studied and determined melancholy is, however, broken in upon by Mr. E. Wyndham Tennant with the rippling charm of 'Home Thoughts,' and the work of Mr. Tennant, one of the young officers of distinguished talent

whom the country has lost—or should we say gained?—in the war, is enough to give a real value to this collection. He and Mr. Victor Perowne are certainly the truest poets in the old sense—seekers after a simple fragrant beauty—in the whole company. Mr. Perowne's 'Lady of Shallott' is a beautiful ecstasy (a little reminiscent oddly enough of another Tennysonian poem, 'St. Agnes Eve,') and his 'Dirge' a very musicianly composition. Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell has but one short piece: and Helen Rootham, the ninth contributor, who is much concerned with the issues of life and death, speaks her thought in well-chosen phrase, yet hardly gives us enough to judge her by. She give us, to close, 'Three Prose Poems' from the French of Jean Arthur Rimbaud.

THE MORNING POST.

Some of the poetical new births are certain to arouse the wrath of the mechanic, Victorian critics who have not learnt that poetry is not a sort of block cosmos but a living, growing creature. For example, 'Wheels,' which is an anthology of verse by a group of poets with a common confidence in the illuminated word and a common contempt for the look-see of the complacent academic, has aroused a little storm of obloquy. 'Precious,' 'macabre,' 'Baudelairian' are some of the epithets hurled at them, for there is nothing which irritates the hack-critic so much as the appearance of a new 'school' of poetry engaged in quietly working out its own conception of the art. In the work presented there is much achievement and more promise, and we have no doubt whatever that, fifty years hence, the publication of 'Wheels' will be remembered as a notable event in the inner history of English literature. Captain Osbert Sitwell's 'Babel' is a triumph in the dark, fantastical mode (indeed it has the power of Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night,') and must rank as one of the half-dozen finest war-poems. Lieut. Victor Perowne (whose poetical promise we remarked upon when reviewing a little Eton verse-book years ago) is also out of his ap-

prenticeship, while both Arnold James and the late Lieut. Wyndham Tennant, having something to say, have said it with the mystical tongue of a various sincerity. Of the women poets Helen Rootham strikes us as the most profound and accomplished, but the highly-figured verse of Edith Sitwell:

> The sounds seemed warring suns; and music flowed
> As blood; the mask'd lamps showed
>
> Tall houses, light had gilded like despair:
> Black windows, gaping there.

is also impressive, and there are striking passages in Iris Tree's long poem of illusion and disillusion:

> The long road unto nothing I will sing,
> Sing on one note, monotonous and dry,
> Of sameness, calmness, and the years that bring
> No more emotion than the fear to die.

'Wheels' must be read by all who are studying the way English literature is 'reacting' to the historic storm without —and whether they like it or like it not, the book is certain to have more influence in the future than a thousand critical brick-bats or bouquets.

THE OXFORD CHRONICLE.

The poets who have contributed to this anthology present such identity of mood and even imagery that it might seem that the mood and its emotion had been agreed upon, and was therefore not spontaneous but cultivated, were it not that the common chance which has caught them as fellow-victims of a world-disease is the obvious fount of each muse, and it is through deriving from water that is, alas! muddied that the poems are akin. The old traditional loves of the poets are far to seek. This verse does not dance with joy, but shivers with fear, creaks with menace, droops with despair. It is the work for the most part of very young people, and it is quite unbearably old. Its revelation is the grim fact that the dead are less dead than the living, that where the war has spared it has slain. Miss Iris Tree in particular, who, when she will,

can be the easy mistress of the haunting line, and, in her own phrase, catch 'fancy's fire' in 'the running swiftness of a rhyme,' concentrates instead on a fierce mood that invokes the worm 'that shall come at last to be my paramour,' and poises herself on a single note 'monotonous and dry.'

The anthology derives its title from this thought of Miss Nancy Cunard, whose symbolism is further elaborated in the work of Mr. Osbert Sitwell.

But Mr. Sitwell is a poet with too much energy for the fantastic symbolism of paper worlds and golden bladders, pantomime and pierrot. In 'The Beginning'—the chaos of creation—and 'The End' he piles up imagery till it well-nigh baffles apprehension, while in 'Night' and 'Black Mass' he gathers, item by item, into a catalogue the inducings of human terror, and, making music of 'the evil things of night' leaves us full 'of that which makes one nigh to dead with fear.' Miss Edith Sitwell, though 'Antic Hay' shows how well she can command delight, and 'The King of China's Daughter' that she can be altogether charming, presents for preference a tale like 'The Mother' of black tragedy, or, as in the Lamentation from 'Saul,' verse, like Mr. Sitwell's, of accumulated imagery. Miss Cunard, like Miss Helen Rootham, is conquered happily by her own youth, so that the mood she would induce sits upon her only like the paper cap of one of her thousand clowns.

For the rest, there are Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, who has moulded his medium skilfully to his picture; Mr. Victor Tait Perowne, whose loosely-woven little poems acquire an added clarity by their nearness to the packed line; and three poems, now familiar and prized from Wyndham Tennant, whose mind and method, philosophy and appeal, were alike foreign to the spirit, so perturbing and provoking, of this anthology.

THE LANCET.

The camps and the trenches during the past two years have produced many copies of verses having claim to notice as beauti-

ful poetry, and 'Wheels,' though little of its contents may have been written in the circumstances of war, has an origin similar to that of the rapidly increasing war anthology. It is composed, speaking for its common and essential quality, of impressions suddenly seized and handed on by writers who are conscious of what has been suggested to themselves and who are determined to share the suggestion with others. The idea of these young poets is that the role of poetry is rather to crystalise fleeting views and aspects, to catch and fix vague and half-formed ideas, than to do any of the brave things associated in popular literature with the title of poet—to lead, to uplift, to amaze. The inspiration of these nine different writers—different in style, technique, and standard of accomplishment—has been a common one. They strive to show that any impression received by one person should be communicable to others by the medium of symbolic word-pictures. We recommend the book to lovers of verse.

THE SOUTHPORT GUARDIAN.

Of several new anthologies, 'Wheels' is the most distinctive. It is not easy to find the axle—'1916'—into which the several spokes of this wheel of verse fit; indeed, personal friendship rather than poetic kinship would seem to have been the sole condition for admission into the anthology. So here we have songs as diverse as the beautiful 'Home Thoughts in Laventie,' by the late Hon. E. Wyndham Tennant, to which we have made previous reference; and Osbert Sitwell's wonderfully realistic 'The Beginning,' showing the coming of order out of the chaos of creation, and 'The End,' a vivid picture of slimy horror as the world slips back into the void: between his picture of 'Night' and the rich promise of 'Pierrot Old,' a romantic narrative, and 'Twentieth Century Harlequinade.' . . . There is a feeling for nature in some of the poems of Arnold James; the consciousness of youth, potentialities, its friendships, and its frustrations, are effectively expressed by Helen Rootham, while

in the three prose poems from the French she shows a subtle appreciation of moods and of words.

The most matured, and most perfect in feeling and in form, are the songs of Iris Tree, especially the 'If I were God.' With 'concentrated agony' she sings of 'the dullard masses,' the four last stanzas of the poem expressing all the disillusion and disappointment of youth with an almost morbid intensity.

POETRY : A MAGAZINE OF VERSE.

This book presents itself in a pleasingly satiric cover, bright yellow, displaying a scraggy nursemaid and a makeshift perambulator. It is the proper sort of ink-pot to hurl itself in the face of senile pomposity. Here, however, the gaiety ends and the contents of the book have none of the lightness of Miss Sitwell's earlier couplet :

> With children our primeval curse
> We overrun the universe.

Of the nine contributors Wyndham Tennant has already been claimed by the war. One cannot read his 'Home Thoughts in Laventie' without being convinced that his loss is a loss to poetry as well as to those who knew him. It strikes me that real artists who have been plunged into the present inferno have written simply and without rhetoric, without any glorification of war. The poem is written with prose simplicity ; with the possible exception of 'battle-wending' there is no over-decorative word. These properties are of more importance than the very much over-emphasised present question of free and regular verse.

Most of the anthology is in older forms. Miss Cunard shows at times surprising closeness of thought, and a talent for epithets with her dwarfs 'with slyly-pointed steps' and her aged abstractions, Love, Joy, Sin, 'in solemn stage-learnt ecstasy.' She uses the sonnet, like most poets at the beginning of their course, without recognizing that the sonnet is a peculiar costume. Like duck trousers or a scarlet hunting coat, it is suitable on some occasions and not quite fitting on

others. Few forms, save the classic quantitive measures, are a better drill-ground for one's early effort, but a sense of form is not shown by trying to fit matter which is not a sonnet into essentially a sonnet-shell. Miss Cunard manages best in the sonnet 'Uneasiness.'

Both Sacheverell and Edith Sitwell show promise ; the latter using alternate ten and six syllable lines with excellent rhythmic and tonal effect but with an inexcusable carelessness as to meaning and to the fitness of expression.*

The anthology closes with some excellent prose translations from Rimbaud by H. Rootham. We would welcome a complete translation in the same manner. E. P.

Editor's Note:—*'We are in especial bored with male stupidity.'
From '*The Condolence*' by Ezra Pound.

MR. GOSSIP, THE DAILY SKETCH.

But will it be poetry I wonder ?

SOME OPINIONS.

THE WEEKLY DESPATCH.

The contents of 'Wheels'—an anthology of verse—suggests that a band of very young and cultured amateurs have conspired together to write poetry. The conspiracy has failed, despite a good deal of dark and sinister language. For instance, one of the conspirators, Osbert Sitwell, has seen the world's doom proclaimed by an evil lichen that is 'like blood dried brown upon a dead man's face.' He has also heard 'the nauseous flapping of Night's bat-like wings,' and knows the feeling when 'like scaly snakes, the hymn to evil writhes through the sub-conscious basis of our mind.' Some experience !

'Pull down the sun and burn the fiery moon,' cries another of the conspirators, Edith Sitwell, in frank defiance of lunar theories. Later on when we find that (chafing under the licensing restrictions of the Universe) 'the deserts cry unto the moon for rain' we realise that some new planet has swum into our ken. Victor Perowne knows a place where may be

heard 'the roar of the world rushing down the wantways of the stars'; and Helen Rootham modestly admits she is young enough to 'seize each passing hour and fling it gaily where its fellows lie.'

Iris Tree (the daughter of Sir Herbert Beerhohm Tree) considers 'there are songs enough of love, of joy, of grief,' so she sings contemptuously:

> The dullard masses that no God can save!
> If I were God, to rise and strike you down
> And break your churches in an angry wave
> And make a furious bonfire of your town!

Other results of the deification of Iris Tree would be:

> Passion high-pedestalled, pangs turned to treasure,
> Perfected and undone and built afresh
> With concentrated agony and Pleasure. . . . .
> If I were God, and not an ounce of flesh!

Iris Tree's lurid part in the conspiracy also includes a vision of 'the evening dipped knee-deep in blood,' and a kiss for

> Mouth of the dust . . . corruption absolute,
> Worm, that shall come at last to be my paramour.

To Nancy Cunard, daughter of Sir Bache and Lady Cunard, belongs the honour of having given the abortive plot the name which will identify it to literary posterity. She sometimes thinks

> . . . that all our thoughts are Wheels
> Rolling forever through the painted world,
> Moved by the cunning of a thousand clowns. . . .

This is not (as might be thought at first) a nasty dig at publishers, but merely a poetic fancy of the author, the strength of whose imagination may be judged from the sonnet in which she hears

> Armies of corpses hid behind the wall
> That creep and grind and tear each other's souls.

One feels that a poem containing Cunard lines like these deserve a stronger title than 'Uneasiness.' Nancy Cunard's

boldest conspiratorial stroke, however, is the eight lines headed 'From the Train;:

Smoke-stacks, coal-stacks, hay-stacks, slack,
Colourless, scentless, pointless, dull;
Railways, highways, roadways, black,
Grantham, Birmingham, Leeds and Hull.
Steamers, passengers, convoys, trains,
Merchandise travelling over the sea;
Smut-filled streets and factory lanes,
What can these ever mean to me?

The answer, of course (judging from the form in which the thesis is presented) is 'Nothing.' By the way, the price of the entertainment is half-a-crown, including tax.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

'Wheels,' that remarkable anthology of verse, containing contributions by Nancy Cunard and Iris Tree, which was reviewed in this column some time ago, now appears in a second edition, soberly garbed in black instead of the eccentric yellow cover of the first issue. Few books of recent verse have inspired so many interesting criticisms, and the authors and publisher have added to the entertaining nature of the volume by reprinting as an appendix the critical squawks and grunts that the first appearance of 'Wheels' evoked. *The Weekly Despatch* comment is honoured by quotation in full; and one cannot but admire the sporting spirit of the poets who admit all criticism, favourable or otherwise, as the natural corollary of their poetic endeavours. Meanwhile, a fine ironic preface in blank verse belabours anew those critics who condemned the book on the ground of 'bad taste.' Mr. Blackwell, the publisher, tells me that he intends to make 'Wheels' an annual production like his Oxford Poetry series. Published round about Christmas time it should make an excellent 'shocker' for bachelor aunts and spinster uncles.

THE ABERDEEN JOURNAL.

. . . An unsatisfying volume . . . that there is in evidence considerable poetic ability we willingly confess, but the ability is uncurbed in its choice of subject, and its imagination is unwholesome.

THE NEW STATESMAN.

. . . It is rather stupid to put a picture of a nursemaid wheeling a perambulator with a baby in it on the cover. None of the contributors can be quite so young as that.

COUNTRY LIFE.

Most of them show their youth by taking a most sad and dismal view of this dim spot which men call earth. . . . One laughs.

THE LANCET.

'"Wheels" has no medical aspects whatever.'

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE.

. . . The fœtidness of the whole clings to the nostrils. . . .

THE LITERARY WORLD.

Mr. Osbert and Miss Edith Sitwell we can imagine as anxiously asking themselves: 'What can we do to be original?'

THE COMMONWEALTH.

A readable volume of thoughtful poems by sensible people who are able to write melodious verse and present poetic images while they philosophize about many things. There is not a dull page, and scarcely one which does not, incidentally, picture some charming rural scene, as it ponders upon the mysteries, joys, and pains of life.

THE ATHENÆUM.

Several of the contributors have produced some good work.

EVERYMAN.

The names of the poets are unfamiliar to us.

THE OBSERVER.

The names speak for themselves.

THE SKETCH.

Their names are sufficient to ensure a second edition.

THE WORLD.

The verses are of varying quality. . . . Miss Nancy Cunard is a member of a group of smart society girls.

THE OBSERVER.

The war impulse towards poetry has affected the young 'intellectuals' of society as well as found poets in plainer places. We see a reflection of this in a volume of original verse which Mr. Blackwell announces. . . . of the fourth volume, all needing to be said is that Captain Bairnsfather writes as well as illustrates it.—'Bullets and Billets.'

P.S. The most interesting lumes of verse. . . . if not the best are at present being issued by Mr. Blackwell.—*The Weekly Dispatch.*

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WHEELS. 1st volume, 1916. Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

Conceived in morbid eccentricity and executed in fierce factitious gloom.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

We have no doubt whatever that, fifty years hence, the publication of 'Wheels' will be remembered as a notable event in the inner history of English Literature.—*Morning Post.*

Aldous Huxley. *THE BURNING WHEEL.*
Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

Without any doubt an original poet.—*The Nation.*

Edith Sitwell. *THE MOTHER, AND OTHER POEMS.*
Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

In all these poems one thing is clear. They come from within. Miss Sitwell does not describe, she lives in her verse. This very little therefore points a long way.—*The Times.*

Edith and Osbert Sitwell. *20TH CENTURY HARLEQUINADE.*
Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

Every pretty woman carries a vanity bag into which she puts all her most cherished possessions, from a passionate letter from Flanders to a dinky little pink stick of lip-salve. When writers of verses are happy enough to collar publishers they put all the most precious possessions of their hearts into their books—which are vanity bags. . . . [This] vanity bag [is] not so pretty.—*The New Witness.*

E. Wyndham Tennant. *WORPLE FLIT AND OTHER POEMS.*
Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

Mr. Tennant has an unclouded vision and a blessed gift of direct speech.—*The Glasgow Herald.*

Iris Tree. *POEMS.* Privately printed.

Sherard Vines. *THE TWO WORLDS.*
Published by B. H. BLACKWELL.

An extremely vivid and charming poet.—*The Nation.*

Oxford: Printed by Rogers and Broome, Cowley S. John Press, 280 Cowley Road.

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